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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

August 1985

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are Nancy Drexler, Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, R. Thomas Lenaghan, Kenneth Liberstein, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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**Africa General**

**Africa General**

13/08/85 Under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Regional Conference on Security, Disarmament, and Development opens in Lome, Togo. Participants include 40 delegates from nearly all African countries as well as representatives from a host of international organizations. Emphasizing the importance of the conference, speakers point out that the threat of nuclear war touches all countries, and that the funds spent on arms by developed as well as developing countries further retard development in the Third World.

**East Africa**

**Sudan**

05/08/85 Sudanese Defense Minister Brigadier General Osman Abdallah announces that the Sudanese Armed Forces will not participate in the US-sponsored Bright Star military operations this year. Sudan's refusal to engage in joint maneuvers is a significant reversal of former President Numeiri's past policy of military cooperation with Sudan's two most important strategic allies. The Sudanese decision is consistent with the Transitional Military Council's intention to reduce its dependence on the United States and adopt a more balanced position between the superpowers.

23/08/85 The Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) battles government forces at Kadugli in central Sudan. This attack represents the furthest northern penetration of SPLA rebel activity and reaffirms the unwillingness of John Garang to accept the Siwardahab government.

**East/Central Africa**

**Burundi**

21/08/85 Thirteen of the 16 priests, arrested at the beginning of the month for celebrating mass in violation of legislation prohibiting religious activities, are released. Since February, 90 foreign missionaries have left Burundi because of the government's refusal to renew their visas. The Vatican indicates that departures of missionaries will continue.

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East/Central Africa

**Tanzania**

**15/08/85**

Zanzibar President Ali Hassan Mwinyi is nominated sole candidate to succeed Julius Nyerere as President of Tanzania in October 1985. Mwinyi emerged as a compromise candidate between the two main contenders, Revolutionary Party of Tanzania (CCM) stalwart Rashidi Kawawa and Salim Salim, who is considered a liberal reformer.

**Uganda**

**00/08/85**

The situation in Uganda remains unstable following July's coup d'etat. Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) troops are reported to be near Kampala and to control much of the south and west of the country. Museveni objects to the fact that the military leaders who ousted Obote have set up a ruling Military Council and Cabinet without NRA participation. Museveni vows to continue his guerrilla war if the present government does not resign and allocate half the seats of a new Military Council to the NRA. Some negotiations with the military leaders have taken place and peace talks are scheduled to resume in Kenya on 4 August. Museveni is likely to agree to peace only if the NRA is given a significant role in the government.

**Zaire**

**08/08/85**

Five West German military instructors arrive in Kinshasa under the terms of a military cooperation agreement between Zaire and West Germany. The West German technical team will train Civil Guard soldiers for a 6-month period.

Horn of Africa

**Ethiopia**

**00/08/85**

There is heavy fighting in several areas of Eritrea Province throughout the month. On 14 July, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) announces that its guerrillas forced government troops to abandon the left flank of the Nakfa front. According to unconfirmed reports in late August, government forces recaptured Tessenei and Barentu. The loss of Tessenei, which lies along an important EPLF supply route near the the Sudanese border, is a serious blow to the rebels. Barentu was captured by the EPLF in July 1985 and government forces fought during most of July and August to recapture the town.

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**August 1985**

15/08/85 The Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) reports destroying several military vehicles and killing dozens of Ethiopian soldiers in four hit-and-run attacks during the second half of July.

**Somalia**

01/08/85 Somali and US troops conduct a week-long military exercise in Somalia, part of Bright Star 85, during the first week of August.

**Indian Ocean Islands**

**Madagascar**

01/08/85 The leader of an underground martial arts cell, Pierre Mizael Andrianarijaona, and 19 of his followers are killed during a clash with Malagasy soldiers backed by armored vehicles in Antananarivo. The heavily armed security forces stage the assault on the headquarters of the quasi-religious sect, based on the Chinese martial art of Kung Fu, following a series of conflicts between the Kung Fu practitioners and Madagascar's security forces. Blamed by authorities for much of Madagascar's street crime, the sect went underground in September 1984 and attacked a Youth Awareness encampment near the capital in December 1984, killing 50 militiamen.

**Sahel**

**Burkina Faso**

12/08/85 Head of State Thomas Sankara dissolves his government, placing 19 of 22 cabinet ministers in charge of collective farms in an area about 100 kilometers east of Ouagadougou. All functions previously handled by the dispatched ministers will be assumed by Sankara and the three remaining cabinet ministers, who are now designated "general coordinators." The three are Captain Blaise Compaore, former Minister of State in Charge of Justice, Major Jean-Baptiste Lingani, former Minister of State in Charge of Defense, and Captain Henri Zongo, former Minister of State Enterprises. The dismissals are thought to be part of Sankara's drive against growing bourgeois tendencies among his cabinet officials.

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**Senegal**

22/08/85 Abdoulaye Wade, leader of the main opposition party, the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), is arrested along with 20 other people, including one National Assembly member, following an unauthorized peaceful march in Dakar to protest apartheid in South Africa. The march and the arrests come at a time when relations between the government and opposition groups are especially tense. Although the march was held on an innocuous pretext, the government took action in order to prevent rumors that it is prepared to allow unfettered criticism or that it is too weak and indecisive to muzzle the opposition. Following 3 days of hearings by the Tribunal for Flagrant Misdemeanors, Wade and 14 other detainees are released.

**Southern Africa**

**Mozambique**

30/07/85 Two Italian missionaries are kidnapped during a Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) guerrilla attack on the city of Luabo, 300 kilometers to the north of Maputo.

07/08/85 RENAMO says that it will negotiate directly with London and Dublin for the release of two British citizens, who were abducted by RENAMO guerrillas in Luabo, central Zambezia Province, the previous week. Both men are employed by the South African Techserve company and were carrying out rehabilitation work on a sugar mill.

08/08/85 RENAMO guerrillas attack 4 passenger buses on the main north-south highway, killing 15 people and wounding another 42. The attack takes place 50 kilometers north of Maputo, near the site of two June attacks.

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**Mozambique/Zimbabwe**

00/08/85 Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert Mugabe informs Parliament that he is planning to increase significantly the Zimbabwean military presence in Mozambique in order to protect Zimbabwean interests from RENAMO attacks. Zimbabwe, which has had 3,000 troops stationed in Mozambique for the past several months, will send up to 30,000 troops from its 41,000-strong Army to defend the 250-mile corridor from the eastern Zimbabwean city of Mutare to the Mozambican port of Beira, through which runs a pipeline which carries Zimbabwe's entire gasoline and diesel oil supply. The corridor also contains a railway line linking Mutare to Beira which carries a high percentage of Zimbabwe's trade. Zimbabwean troops are also repairing the pipeline which was recently blown up by RENAMO rebels.

**South Africa**

24/08/85 South African authorities arrest 27 leading opposition figures, including Farouk Meer, Acting President of the United Democratic Front, in Durban and Cape Town. As the state of emergency in 36 magisterial districts around Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape enters its sixth week, violence continues in 20 black townships. Since the state of emergency was proclaimed on 21 July, about 140 people have died, the majority killed by police, and more than 2,000 have been detained for interrogation. Government authorities stated that 1,038 of those are still being held.

26/08/85 South African police arrest Trevor Tutu, the 29-year-old son of Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, following a courtroom incident in which he criticized last week's police roundup of children in the black township of Soweto.

28/08/85 The police in Cape Town, using shotguns, whips, rubber bullets and tear gas, battle thousands of protesters from all of South Africa's racial groups. The cause of the violence was an official prohibition of a planned march by the protesters to Pollsmoor Prison to demand the release of



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jailed African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela. Anti-apartheid activist Reverend Allan Boesak, who was scheduled to lead the march, was arrested the day before the march. He is being detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act which allows detention for an indefinite period without trial or access to a lawyer. In a separate development, officials in Pretoria announce that the largest organization of black high school students, the Congress of South African Students, is now outlawed.

**Zimbabwe**

**06/08/85**

Police announce that a member of Parliament was among 31 people arrested during a government crackdown on the opposition Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) party. Sydney Malunga, the chief whip of Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party, was arrested in Harare while trying to leave for the southern city of Bulawayo.

**West Africa**

**Cameroon**

**24/08/85**

Under the guise of fostering national integration and promoting a "new society," President Paul Biya reorganizes his cabinet by replacing 10 ministers with younger men sharing the reformist views of the president. The changes include the replacement of the Ministry of the Armed Forces with a special presidential delegate responsible for defense, thus strengthening Biya's control over the military. Biya also hopes to prevent the sort of putsch, attempted by the military in 1984, that resulted in a significant number of casualties.

**Gabon**

**09/08/85**

The Movement for National Reconstruction (MORENA), a banned opposition group, announces that it has set up a government-in-exile, headed by Max Anicet-Mbabinga, which is based in Paris. A press conference, which was planned by MORENA last February to announce the government's formation, was banned by French authorities because it was feared that its existence could seriously jeopardize relations between France and Gabon.

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West Africa

**Gabon**

11/08/85 Air Force Captain Alexandre Mandja is executed by firing squad for plotting to overthrow the government last month. It is the first execution for treason since Bongo came to power in 1967. A total of six military men were accused of involvement in the plot. Two other men were accused of attempting to overthrow the government and received sentences of life imprisonment during their trial at the beginning of the month. A third was accused of complicity and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment. Two others were acquitted. Probably in an attempt to appease public criticism for the execution, the last six political prisoners in the country are released 5 days later. All six, arrested in November 1982, are members of MORENA.

**Guinea**

05/08/85 The State Secretary responsible for Guineans outside of the country, Jean-Claude Diallo, announces that those responsible for the 4 July coup attempt will be put on trial at a future date. This announcement contradicts Head of State Lansana Conte's earlier pronouncements which threatened the authors of the coup attempt, led by Colonel Diarra Traore, with immediate execution. Conte has obviously been swayed by world opinion, which has been strongly urging him to give the plotters due process.

West Africa

**Ivory Coast**

13/08/85 President Felix Houphouet-Boigny's recent political speech at Gagnoa, announcing that his successor will be "peace, unity, and teamwork," fuels speculation that he does not intend to name a candidate for vice president prior to the elections in October. He will probably again arrange that Ivory Coast's single party alter the constitution so as to allow a group of three individuals to run the country on an interim basis until a new president is elected should Houphouet-Boigny fail to complete the mandate he is expected to obtain in the October elections.

West Africa

**Liberia**

30/07/85 Liberia accords full diplomatic recognition to the Polisario Front's Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR). Liberia

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becomes the first African state to recognize the SDAR since it became a member of the Organization of African Unity in November 1984.

31/07/85 Former Finance Minister and current Liberian Action Party (LAP) Executive Committee member Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson is arrested for criticizing the government of President Samuel Doe during a July speech in Philadelphia. Two other key opposition leaders, Dusty Wolokollie and John Karaweaye of the Liberian Peoples' Party (LPP), have been in detention since July 18. Wolokollie had only just been released after being acquitted of sedition during a 10-month trial. These actions against some of the more popular opposition figures, together with the fact that only the relatively insignificant Unity Party (UP) has been allowed to propose candidates for the legislature and presidency, cast serious doubts on the fairness of the upcoming elections.

Nigeria

24/07/85 In an attempt to revitalize companies and corporations run by the state, Head of State General Buhari says that many parastatal corporations, particularly those under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture, will be sold outright to private investors. Other parastatals, such as the national airlines and shipping companies, are to be run as stringently as private, corporate enterprises. Managers of corporations that fail to perform will be replaced. These measures represent a significant attempt to restructure and thus improve Nigeria's faltering economy.

27/08/85 Army officers, under the leadership of Major General Ibrahim Babangida, overthrow the 20-month old military government of Major General Muhammad Buhari. Babangida also ousts Brigadier General Tunde Idiagbon, Buhari's right-hand man who occupied the number two position in the former government, but retains most members of the previous military government. While Babangida claims that the former government's unwillingness to deal with Nigeria's severe economic problems precipitated the coup, growing insularity

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and intransigence on the part of Buhari and Idiagbon also played a key role. One of Babangida's first acts as president is the repeal of "Decree 4," a measure promulgated by Buhari and Idiagbon which permitted the government to jail journalists for printing stories that embarrassed the government. Babangida also states that unlike Buhari, he will attempt to resolve the impasse that has denied Nigeria International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance.

**Sierra Leone**

02/08/85 The Central Committee of the ruling All People's Congress (APC) unanimously endorses Army Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh, 48, as the sole candidate in the forthcoming presidential election. This indicates that retiring President Siaka Stevens has settled on Momoh as his chosen successor, thus by-passing Vice-President S. I. Koroma. Stevens is setting an unusual precedent by designating a military man to succeed a civilian as head of state.

**Togo**

28/08/85 Just prior to the Pope's visit, the government reinforces security forces at points of entry into the country following a series of bomb explosions in Lome which occurred on 8 through 10 August, the night of 16 August, and 24 August. The police also discovered an unexploded bomb at the airport on 24 August. Foes of the regime of General Gnassingbe Eyadema, who are living in exile in Ghana, are suspected of responsibility for the blasts. Although none of the explosions caused serious damage, they apparently signal a new level of political activism in a country that has remained peaceful and relatively stable for the past 18 years under the Eyadema administration.